

What is claimed is:

5 1. A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a polymeric body having a first end, a second end, and a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, said first end having a first cavity adapted to receive a support member extending from said drive mechanism.

2. The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said channel is adapted to receive ^{an} incised sternum.

3. The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said first cavity is a blind hole having a predetermined depth from said first end.

10 4. The surgical retractor blade of claim 3 wherein said blind hole is substantially cylindrical.

5. The surgical retractor blade of claim 3 wherein said depth is at least about 1.125 inches long.

15 6. The surgical retractor blade of claim 1 wherein said first cavity becomes progressively smaller in a direction away from said first end.

7. The retractor blade assembly of claim 1 further comprising a second cavity adapted to receive a second support member extending from said drive mechanism.

20 8. A surgical retractor blade for attaching to a drive mechanism, said retractor blade comprising a polymeric body having a first end, a second end, a channel adapted to engage one side of an incision in a patient, and a rail extending along at least a portion of said polymeric body.

can
C
3

9. The surgical retractor blade of claim 8, wherein said rail has a top portion and a bottom portion, said bottom portion having a narrowed region adjacent said top portion forming first and second tabs on said top portion.

10. The surgical retractor blade of claim 8, further comprising a plurality of
5 open slots for receiving a suture therein.

11. The surgical retractor blade of claim 10, wherein said open slots have an internal wall and a suture locking member having [~]fixed end and a free end, said free end engaging said internal wall so as to clamp a suture placed between said free end and said internal wall.

gla
4

12. The surgical retractor blade of claim 11 wherein said suture locking member is substantially rigid and pivots about said fixed end.

13. The surgical retractor blade of claim 12 further comprising a spring member biased against said suture locking member to forcibly urge said free end towards said internal wall.

14. The surgical retractor blade of claim 10 wherein at least one of said open slots have a first slot section which bifurcates into a second slot section and a third slot section.

15

15. The surgical retractor blade of claim 14, wherein each of said second and third slot sections have an internal wall and a suture locking member having [~]fixed end and a free end, said free end engaging said internal wall so as to clamp a suture placed between said free end and said internal wall.

20

16. The surgical retractor blade of claim ~~8~~ wherein said rail is curved along its length.

5/26
17. The surgical retractor blade of claim 8 wherein said first end has a cavity adapted to receive a support member extending from said drive mechanism.

18. The surgical retractor blade of claim 17 wherein said cavity is a tapered hole.

5 19. The surgical retractor blade of claim 18 further comprising a flexible polymeric flap adapted to flexibly engage soft tissue surrounding said incision.